

ConDemNation

A Garland of
Scurrilous Rhymes, Parodies and Rants

To Greet our
New Political Masters

Composed “In the Nation’s Interest”

O for a Jonathon Swift to prick our P.R. Politicians with his pen. Maybe those Lib Dems chosen to make a deal with the Tories thought they were discussing *proportional representation*. They weren't: the letters P.R. only ever stood for *public relations*.

Here we humbly present some scribbling thoughts that you may in consequence be enlightened and relieved that you are not alone; whilst also being inspired by knowing that a standard of versifying has been set, below which you, esteemed reader, could not possibly fall.

Some of what follows is best sung with gusto, particularly the two parodies of The Red Flag. Can you detect the quotation from Fats Waller or the shameless theft from Milton?

Please join in.

Contributions from Anon are also welcome.

Just remember the motto of ConDemNation: 'Bad politics begets bad poetry'.

Note from the editor of ConDemNation

Heraclitus told us that we could never step into the same river twice: we must learn to cope with change. Sisyphus, however, was condemned to atone for his sins by repeatedly pushing the same boulder up the same hill: some things never change. Meanwhile, Petronius warned us of the propensity of policy-makers to re-organise and engender a spurious sense of having captured and controlled change while actually causing costly confusion.

For the sake of our sanity ranting is an appropriate response to the changes presented to us. Read on to experience the satisfaction that ranting brings.

Warning and Lamenting

On the announcement of the General Election

Come, cheer up my lads 'tis to hell that we steer,
To add something worse in election year,
New Labour has taught you to worship greed,
We Tories are happy for that is our creed.

So bail out the banks and print money for bonuses,
Free the economy and see who benefits,
Let's bash a few gays and chase a few foxes,
Keep out the strangers, you know they're obnoxious.

We'll hear nothing more of this equality crap,
Build more tough jails, now there's a good chap,
As we drink to each other in our gated community,
And evade our taxation with easy immunity.

As the Bullingdon Club gets the prizes of gold,
The cost will be borne by the young and the old,
Of the classes that failed to rise to the top,
And go to Eton to be members of Pop.

Cliff Jones April 6th. 2010

Who will buy my sweet red poesy?

A lament for Labour

The peoples' flag is limp and pink,
No longer red as you might think,
Our martyrs' dead evoke no memories,
They left the field to our enemies.

So let us raise the banner high,
As we soar off in the sky,
We might as well be dramatic,
Flying to our flat on the Adriatic.

Or might someone wish to give us lolly,
To ply our skills within the lobby,
We really know how to spin for liars,
Just send the cheque to Hoon and Byers.

So what became of Atlee and Bevin?
Of free health care and nationalisation,
What price now a socialist heaven?
That all went with Aneurin Bevan.

Cliff Jones April 8th. 2010

Odes on the Nativity of our ConDemNation

Lines on the forming of a coalition

Gladstone, Asquith and Lloyd George,
William Beveridge and Maynard Keynes,
What think you of this alliance forged?
Your party imprisoned by Tory chains?

Heroic days of the Welfare State,
Of old age pensions and votes for women,
Values lost at an alarming rate,
In pursuit of power and a cabinet position.

How will you face the electorate next time?
Will you enthuse your grassroots mob?
Not sure you'll get this vote of mine,
Since your conscience was shed for the sake of a job.

Cliff Jones 12th May 2010

The Compromisers Chorus

Across these green and pleasant lands
Manifesto disassemblers
Work with soiled and grubby hands
For the prospect of a quick knee tremble.

Forgetting what was said last week
(a long, long time in politics)
Election pledges, with barefaced cheek,
Are ditched.
And now we all agree with Nick.

The procession of our principles
Marches onwards to the grave.
Grieve not, my friend! You can rejoice
For Nick agrees with Dave.

Chorus

Give up, give up your cherished views!
Cometh the man, cometh the hour.
There's nothing that I wouldn't do
To grab a little bit of power!

Nick Sorensen 13th May 2010

David and Nicolette

Kiss me quick
Said cleggy Nick
I'll do whatever you want-oh
I'll vote for you
I'll see it through
I'll do it all and pronto

I'll never fail
I'll land in jail
If that is what you want-oh
Shout the harshest word
That ever was heard
Just give me that portmanteau

I love you lots
I've got the hots
I'll worship at your **shrine-oh**
Our affair is cursed
But I'll put you first
Well - till you rue the day you became mine-oh

C Hayes.
By appointment 13th May 2010

Readers with memories of old parodies of The Red Flag may recall that one of them contains the lines....

*'The working clarse can kiss my arse
I've got the foreman's job at larst'*

What follows pays homage to that parody with a somewhat different aim in mind.

Nick's New Politics

The ruling clarse now has my arse
All David had to do was arsk
No more politics of envy
I'm in the team till twenty twenty

And when the ghosts of Liberals Parst
Come to haunt my dreaming sleep
I'll tell them they don't bother me
For I am now chief of the sheep

No more marching, no protests
Or 'Woolly Hats Against the Bomb'
Goodbye to the sandelled tendency
For I am now part of the ascendancy

Where does this leave old David Steel
Who told us to prepare for government
He little knew when he said those words
This would put Tories up my fundament.

May 16th Cliff Jones

The place of women in this government

Women in government, whatever next
They should be home looking pretty
Or dusting the dado, looking at NEXT
Not thinking or planning the economy
A fresh G&T when I finish my day
Is what I want from my lovely
Not questions of fact on pensions and pay
Or the state of our new foreign policy

Good old Theresa, O how we tease her
For wearing such fancy footwear
Her pedal extremities couldn't be better
But I cannot think how she got here
Was she at Eton, was she a Wykehamist
Has she been out with the Quorn
There were no silver spoons as her head was kissed
On the day that she was born

Now we men have asserted our natural rights
To be in the cabinet dominant
We can bring in some ladies who eventually might
Show our desire to be tolerant
For we really do like them, honest we do
As long as they remember their place
Which is not at the top; that would *not* do
For even when clever, as some of them are, they're only a pretty face.

Cliff Jones 17th May

Commemorating

We have no rhyme to commemorate the passing of the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF). In partial recompense we offer in memoriam a few lines composed on 18th June 2009 by Cliff Jones upon the passing of its former bedfellow the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS).

.....after many hours of starvation in a garret trying to capture the scansion, metre and poetic intensity of E.J.Thribb of Private Eye this has to be my Magnum Opus.....

So Farewell Then DIUS (an epic poem)

‘We shall achieve World Class Excellence’....

that was your catchphrase.....

‘We are building for the future’.....

that was another....

‘goodbye’....

that was your latest....

er....that’s it

Kevin’s mum says ‘What was DIUS?’....

Cliff Jones (67 and a bit) cont’d p94

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Ranting in Rhythm

A warning to the new Secretary of State for Education (also known as the S.O.S. for Education)

An ode on the passing of postgraduate professional development (PPD) and the onset of the official masters in teaching and learning (MTL)

So farewell then critical reflection
And goodbye Paolo Freire
No more problematising
No more seeking for truth
Hitting the target is now what counts
All for the sake of our youth
Teachers are coached and mentored
In order to learn to do right
Stop asking awkward questions
Dissent must remain out of sight
Every five years they'll be tested
To see if they've done what they should
And if they have not they'll be shunted
For the sake of the general good
Who now remembers de-schooling?
Or knows what was meant by Mode Three?

Maybe Ed Balls is just fooling

Maybe he'll listen to me

As I pluck up enough of my courage

To tell him to jump in the sea

Cliff Jones November 2nd 2009

Postscriptum:

Ed Balls, having been all at sea is, dear reader, now in the sea and sinking, thereby demonstrating the power of poetry. Now he really does know the meaning of S.O.S.

There follows another rhyming rant about those consultants and agents of government that would tell us what to do

Lines on the Inaugural Meeting of the National Advisory Group for Professional Development for the Children's Workforce in Schools on the 24th September 2008 at 151 Buckingham Palace Road London

Born of the bullshit
Risen from the rhetoric
Smug in their certainty
The policy pushing people

Calling for coherence
Driving out dissenters
Keeping to the message
The policy pushing people

Lengthening the lever
Looking for the fulcrum
Applying the forces
The policy pushing people

Targeting the outcome
Measuring the impact
Climbing the league table
The policy pushing people

Following best practice
Hiring consultants
Dreaming of the honours list
The policy pushing people

Implementing strategy
Broadening the remit
Reforming and developing
The policy pushing people

Transforming the culture
Building capacity
Enforcing entitlement
The policy pushing people

Emphasising relevance
Embedding procedure
Committed to improvement
The policy pushing people

Going on for ever
Adapting to each minister
Seeking preferment
The policy pushing people

So it's...

Back into the bullshit
Returning to the rhetoric
Devising further strategies
The policy pushing people

Composed by Cliff Jones as he left the meeting

Message from S.O.S. Gove



26 May 2010

This email is an official communication to schools from the Department for Education.

Message from Michael Gove, Secretary of State for Education

Dear Colleague

I am humbled and delighted that the Prime Minister has appointed me Secretary of State for Education in the new coalition Government. Nothing is more important for our country than getting education right. Schools are where we introduce our children to the best that has been thought and written and education is the process by which we enable every child to take control of their destiny, and to become author of their own life story. That's why the first thing I want to do is to thank you for your work. Teaching is the most important profession in the life of our nation.

I am deeply grateful for everything the teaching profession has already achieved. But I want to go further, both in improving schools and closing the gap between the richest and the poorest. A key principle behind this partnership Government is trusting professionals. That is why this Government will give you more power and control and will trust you to get on with the job. Your views are extremely important to me. I would welcome your thoughts on how you believe we can raise attainment, particularly for the poorest children, and how we might enhance the prestige and status of the teaching profession. If you would like to get in contact please contact me at feedbacktoministers@education.gsi.gov.uk.

Over the coming months our key priorities will include:

- reducing bureaucracy;
- giving teachers and heads more say over the curriculum;
- giving teachers and heads more power to ensure good behaviour; and
- giving all schools the opportunity to apply for academy freedoms if they wish to do so.

The Queen's Speech yesterday was the first step in making these changes a reality. It set out our plans to open up the academies programme to allow all primary, secondary and special schools to gain academy status.

If you would like to register your interest in doing this or would like to find out more information please go to the Department for Education website www.education.gov.uk/academies.

Michael Gove

Invitation to rant in rhyme

Our new Secretary of State (S.O.S.) for Education is pinching an idea from Sweden to set up some costly 'free' schools so it is appropriate to pinch a sad song from that country in order to draw attention to some of his policies. We invite our vast and growing readership to contribute a song on the policies of Secretary Of State Gove to the tune of ABBA's S.O.S. Before sitting down to compose the words you might wish to consider including references to the following; but it's not compulsory.

S.O.S. Gove gave the name '**Troops to Teachers**' to his idea that former soldiers could instil discipline in schools. Maybe he could be more imaginative and, following the politically acclaimed New Labour programme called 'Teach First', name his idea '**Kill First**' or '**Shoot First**'.

He is also reported to be in favour of hanging and tie wearing. Maybe they go together.

You might also wish to reflect upon the last thirteen years wasted by New Labour.

The next bit you can skip as I am only wittering.

The mother of Ivor Novello persuaded him to enter a competition for a patriotic First World War song by writing a bad one herself. This stimulated him to protect the family name by writing the music for 'Keep the Home Fires Burning'. Following her example I have provided the beginning of my own attempt to parody Benny and Bjorn. Not only do I expect you to do better than me but I look forward to a version that also includes notation. And as further stimulus may I draw attention to the great comedian Jimmy James. In his day comics always finished with a song. It was his habit to call upon the conductor of the pit orchestra (known as 'maestro') to provide him with an 'A' so that he could tune in before singing. Being given the note Jimmy James would cup his ear, wobble around it and then utter the immortal words: 'near enough, that'll do'.

In other words, perfection is not only unwanted but it is to be regarded as detracting from the purpose of The Garland which is to match bad politics with bad poetry. This raises the question of when we might be called upon to write good poetry.

Now, surely, you can improve on the following. If unsure then search for the lyrics of S.O.S or listen on YouTube. You can gauge my age by references to the Mekon (the image of Gove) and Dan Dare. Feel free to find more modern references. In fact, feel free to write something entirely different on the theme of Education S.O.S.

Education S.O.S.

The cry of a lost educational soul

You seem so strange to me just like the Mekon was
We have no Daniel Dare for to save us now
And all because we lost our way
Forgot our faith while chasing wealth
ConDeming us to watching you destroy what's left.

Can you hear me wailing, am I really failing?

S.O.S.

Have you made up your mind, are you the nasty kind?

S.O.S.

Would you bring back hanging, soldiers in schools haranguing?

S.O.S.

Will you make the curriculum free for a few to climb the tree?

S.O.S.

Now over to you....

100 Days of S.O.S. Gove

And now for a carefully considered evaluation of Secretary of State (S.O.S.) Gove written to celebrate his 100 days in office. Please note the use of Brecht's alienation technique at the end.

In Hopes

**Michael Gove, the man who strove
So much to get things underway
Is now the buffoon who may very soon
Be spending more time with his family**

**The man is quite mad and awfully bad
At doing his sums at all accurately
Whatever he counts the numbers just mount
And the result is political fantasy**

**The educational desert is strewn with the bones
Of initiatives, quangos and agencies
And Secretaries of State who far too late
Discovered their own fallibility**

**So why does it happen, this failure to see
The faults and the flaws of their policies
Could it be that they might be ever so slightly deluded
Thinking they're right when everyone knows...**

They're wrong!

Cliff Jones

The Garland goes global

From the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education Garland has discovered the following gems.

Two limericks on the Professional Assessment for Californian Teachers (PACT)

There once was an assessment called PACT,
Which videotaped how teachers act.
They showed all their tricks
And were scored with rubrics;
And quality went up: that's a fact.

By Dr Linda Darling-Hammond

The sceptical student of PACT
Was not renowned for his tact.
He said, "I suppose
That nobody knows
If the measurements made are exact".

By Professor Gordon Kirk